

**Arlington Heights, IL.** - Congressman Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) announced Friday a \$78,000 grant awarded to the Arlington Heights Fire Department from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The grant falls under FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program and will be used to purchase a videoconferencing system allowing emergency personnel to better communicate with each other.

"We must ensure that our first responders are able to provide the best and safest response to residents in our community," said Kirk. "Through these funds, the Arlington Heights Fire Department is able to purchase much needed equipment that will allow them to better coordinate responses to emergencies."

The videoconferencing system will connect all four fire stations, the department's regional firefighter training academy, the Village of Arlington Heights' Emergency Operations Center, and the central dispatch system which the fire department employs. Using this system to link the fire department to the dispatch center is critical since the dispatch center services seven additional area municipalities. The videoconferencing learning system allows the department to train and communicate with all on-duty personnel simultaneously without moving firefighters out of their primary response districts.

In addition, the connection with the Village's Emergency Operations Center will facilitate the exchange of real-time information between all four fire stations and village departments during possible times of local and regional crisis.

"As our towns become busier and the values and size of homes increase, the need to have modern equipment that better protects our residents becomes greater," said Kirk. "The videoconferencing system being purchased with this grant serves this purpose and I thank FEMA for recognizing the needs of our first responders in Arlington Heights."

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is administered by the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Domestic Preparedness in cooperation with the Department's United States Fire Administration.